

**STATEMENT OF KATHERINE H. STEVENSON, ACTING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,
BUSINESS SERVICES, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE
INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL
RESOURCES, SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 824 AND
H.R. 995, BILLS TO AMEND PUBLIC LAW 106-348 TO EXTEND THE
AUTHORIZATION FOR ESTABLISHING A MEMORIAL IN THE DISTRICT OF
COLUMBIA OR ITS ENVIRONS TO HONOR VETERANS WHO BECAME DISABLED
WHILE SERVING IN THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES**

July 12, 2007

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 824 and H.R. 995, bills to amend Public Law 106-348 to extend the authorization for establishing a memorial in the District of Columbia or its environs to honor veterans who became disabled while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States. The Department supports enactment of this legislation.

S. 824 and H.R. 995 would authorize an additional eight years for the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation (Foundation) to establish the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in the District of Columbia. This memorial was authorized on October 24, 2000 and the extension would extend the authority to October 24, 2015. The authority to establish the memorial will expire on October 24, 2007 if the Foundation has not secured a permit to begin construction from the National Park Service (NPS) before that date.

The Foundation has proceeded in a professional and responsible manner in all aspects of the memorial process. The site was approved in 2001, the design concept was approved in 2004, and the Foundation continues to seek the direction and advice of the NPS, the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts in developing the design of the

memorial. We look forward to productive meetings with both commissions as the design nears completion.

The Foundation proposes to build the memorial on two acres across Washington Avenue from the U.S. Botanic Gardens and just east of the Department of Health and Human Services headquarters building. The triangular-shaped site is bounded by Second Street to the west, Washington Avenue to the east, and the I-395 tunnel portals on the south. The property was managed by the District of Columbia until December 15, 2006. The site was then transferred to the National Park Service under the terms of the Federal and District of Columbia Government Real Property Act of 2006.

In 2004, the Foundation proceeded to the point of developing its approved design concept but could move no further until the management of the property was determined. Valuable planning time for the memorial was lost while this legislation was under consideration in the 109th Congress. Given the legislative delay as well as the unique aspects of this site and the need to revise traffic patterns in order to achieve both a site worthy of this memorial and the proper urban design in the context of both the U.S. Capitol and the U.S. Botanic Gardens, we feel it is fair to allow the Foundation additional time beyond the four months that now remain available to the Foundation to continue fundraising and complete the design development. We have every expectation that groundbreaking for the memorial will occur within the time period this proposed extension will allow.

There are four instances where similar extensions of time have been granted for the completion of truly superior memorials that the Department manages. They are the memorials to Women in Military Service for America, George Mason, World War II, and Victims of Communism. Extensions also have been granted for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, and we are currently working with the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Foundation in the development of the design in consultation with the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts.

The Department has enjoyed an excellent working relationship with the Disabled Veterans LIFE Memorial Foundation and we are confident that this extension is an appropriate action and worthy of your consideration.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to comment. This concludes my prepared remarks and I will be happy to answer any questions you or other committee members might have.